

Driving Miss Daisy as Memory-Theatre

Daisy: “Isn’t it silly to remember that?”

Hoke: “No sillier than most of what folks remember.”

Abstract

Alfred Uhry’s Pulitzer Prize winning play, *Driving Miss Daisy* (1986) is examined as a site of memory including: Uhry’s own memories upon which the characters and the play itself are based; the role of memory stories, settings and objects in the unfolding of the relationship between its main characters, Daisy Wertham and her chauffeur, Hoke Colburn; and, as the first play in Uhry’s Atlanta Trilogy, a lieu de mémoire of mid-twentieth century Atlanta. Inspired by the thinking of contemporary theatre scholars, and the work of Maurice Halbwachs (1992) and Pierre Nora (1989), we conceptualize *Driving Miss Daisy* as memory-theatre, with sites of memory, memory stories and objects, ghosts, hauntings of the past, and a recasting of history to engage memories and cultural identity.

Key Words

Collective memory, psychoanalytic third, lieux de mémoire, memory-theatre, *Driving Miss Daisy*, Atlanta

Introduction

As Carlson observes, “The close relationship between theatre and memory have been recognized in many cultures and in many different fashions ...and recalled events are the common coin of theatre everywhere in the world at every period” (2001, p.3).

The telling of stories already told, the reenactments of events already enacted, the reexperience of emotions already experienced, these are and have always been central concerns of the theatre in all times and places (p. 3).

Viewing Alfred Uhry’s Pulitzer Prize winning play, *Driving Miss Daisy* (1986) from the perspective of memory theatre, we examine the play as a site of memory including: Uhry’s own memories upon which the characters and the play itself are based; the role of memory stories, setting and objects in the unfolding of the relationship between its main characters, Daisy Wertham and her chauffeur, Hoke Colburn; and, as the first play in Uhry’s “Atlanta Trilogy”, a lieu de mémoire (Nora, 1989) of mid-twentieth century Atlanta. In one scene in Alfred Uhry’s Pulitz-

er Prize winning play, *Driving Miss Daisy* (1986), the two central characters, Daisy Wertham and her chauffeur, Hoke Holburn, have this exchange in Daisy's kitchen,

Hoke: We ain' had good coffee roun' here since Idella pass.

Daisy: You're right. I can cook her biscuits and you can fry her chicken, but nobody can make Idella's coffee. I wonder how she did it?

Hoke: I doan' know. Every time the Hit Parade comes on TV, it puts me in mind of Idella.

Hoke then recalls Idella's daughter's account of Idella's sudden and peaceful death while watching the TV show. To which Daisy replies, "Idella was lucky" (p. 35).

Uhry's play takes place over 25 years, beginning in mid-20th century Atlanta when Daisy, a well-off Jewish widow aged 72, crashes her car into the neighbor's garage, and is deemed by her son Boolie no longer able to drive. In spite of Daisy's fierce objections, Boolie hires Hoke, a Black man in his fifties, to drive Daisy. The play's dramatic arc unfolds in the relationship between Hoke and Daisy from the time of Jim Crow to the Civil Rights era. This scene is but one example of the opportunities in this play to consider the ways that theories of relational and collective memory open up conceptual space for thinking about memory and relationships in a social context. In this paper we explore some of those possibilities, beginning with a brief illustration of our approach.

In the scene above, Daisy and Hoke, who have been together for about a decade at this point, reminisce about Idella, Daisy's long time household help and cook, and they do it in a very specific way; sitting where they used to sit with Idella (a memory setting), sharing sensory memories of 'her' biscuits and 'her' fried chicken (memory objects). Calling up a visual memory, Hoke says he thinks of her every time he sees the Hit Parade (for him a personal memory site). Through this performance of mutual memorializing, Idella, who is never more than an offstage presence in the opening scene of the play, is but one of the 'ghosts' in this memory play.

The term memory play was originally coined by Tennessee Williams to refer to a drama in which a character's memory carries the plot along, and in which the audience witnesses a dramatization of the memory via a character's flashbacks, e.g., Tim Wingfield's enactments of memories of his younger self in *The Glass Menagerie*. Since then there has been a substantial body of scholarship arguing that memory is central to all theatre. Inspired by the thinking of contemporary theatre scholars, including Marvin Carlson (2003) and others (e.g., Malkin, 1999, Mansbridge, 2012), and the work of Maurice Halbwachs (1992) and Pierre Nora (1989), we conceptu-

alize *Driving Miss Daisy*¹ as memory-theatre with sites of memory, memory stories and objects, ghosts, hauntings of the past, and a recasting of history to engage memories and cultural identity.

We illustrate selected psychological and sociocultural concepts via a fictional representation of a close relationship situated in a particular social and historical context. Part of the impetus for the paper comes from the first author's experience teaching a humanities-focused course, "What is Memory" in which students were asked to apply what they were learning about memory to analyze and interpret films, dramas, literature, popular culture, news and social media, and their immediate environment. The idea was for them to learn to "see" their world through a memory studies lens. This paper began as an illustration to help the students view and interpret various materials from multiple memory perspectives.

Here we expand on the original, which focused primarily on relational memory, to include: 1) The origins of the play and the real people and remembered conversations that inspired Uhry's imagination and actor Morgan Freeman's performance; 2) an exploration of the ways that memory stories and sites serve to create space (here conceptualized in terms of the 'psychoanalytic third') for Hoke and Daisy to see each other as complex human beings, and how that builds and undergirds their mutual affection over time; and 3) an exploration of *Driving Miss Daisy* and Alfred Uhry's "Atlanta Trilogy" as lieux de mémoire (Nora, 1989).

Memory as Muse

"There was a real Miss Daisy. She was a friend of my grandmother's in Atlanta back in the forties when I was a child." (Uhry, p. vii). In the preface to his play Uhry explains that the people named Hoke, Daisy and Boolie were real but he used only their names to create the characters. He chose names particular to the Atlanta he grew up in, thus evoking (or creating) memories of a specific time and place for the audience's imagination. When Jim Auchmuty (1989) interviewed Uhry during the making of the film of DMD, he observed that "[e]verywhere Alfred Uhry goes during the shooting, he seems possessed by remembrance. If there is one memory, one *ghost* (emphasis ours), above all others hovering over the movie set, it is that of the chief inspiration for Daisy Wertham, his grandmother, Lena Guthman Fox" (p. 42). Auchmuty's interview of Uhry reveals that much of the story of Daisy and Hoke is based on Uhry's own memories of actual events, including the car crash that led to the hiring of Hoke (based on his grandmother's chauffeur, Will Coleman), his grandmother's distrust of and condescension to blacks, and his

grandmother's weekly visits to the grave of his grandfather. The scene when she objects to Hoke stopping along the roadway to relieve himself is taken from Will's accounting of the incident. Auchmuty writes, "[a]s far back as Uhry can remember, his grandmother was there" (p. 43). Widowed during the depths of the Depression and not having worked for years, she had come to live with Uhry's mother shortly after he was born, and over the years "... grandson grew up and grandmother grew old" (p.43). Not only did Uhry observe his grandmother on a daily basis, he knew Will Coleman well, which helps to account for the fact that Uhry was privy to stories about his grandmother and Will's relationship. "Will was the grandfather I never had and I loved him" (p. 44).

Uhry's memories were not the only ones that ultimately shaped the play's performance. When the actor Morgan Freeman, who played Hoke in the play and the film, first saw the blurb about the upcoming production of *Daisy* on the bulletin board at Playwrights Horizons, "... [t]he character of Hoke stopped him cold. 'I know this man,' he thought to himself. Indeed, the man could have been his stepfather" (p. 45). "The first time Uhry and Freeman spoke, the relationship between Hoke and Daisy became a collaboration [and according to Auchmuty,] "From the first, the actor added layers of irony—a raised eyebrow here, a skeptical 'lawd-a-mercy' there. It was as though Freeman knew without being told that Will used to call Lena 'Mammy' behind her back" (p. 45). And on the subject of ghosts, Freeman tells of being approached backstage after a performance of *Daisy* by the son of Will Coleman, who told Freeman, "I never thought I'd see my daddy walk again" (p. 45).

Memory and close relationships

Although the thinking of Halbwachs (1992) and others (Erll, 2011) about the social construction of collective and family memory provide ways to think about shared memory and *group* [our emphasis] solidarity, and the work of Fivush (2011) and Fivush et al. (2011) has illuminated the dynamics of the parental/caregiver and social peer roles in the development of autobiographical memory in children and adolescents, the ways that memory constructs, inhibits, and/or mediates affective aspects of dyadic adult relationships has not yet been well-conceptualized. Sutton (2014), in his critical survey of the concept of scaffolding in developmental psychology, notes that "... some of the most important and under-studied forms of scaffolding occur in affective domains: our moods and emotions are constantly shaped, given precision or flavor, by way of

social uptake, culturally-specific caring practices, or self-induced rituals and habits (p. 4). In *Driving Miss Daisy* the evolution of the affective relationship between Hoke and Daisy--within the social context of race and social location--is the play, and the stages of the relationship are dramatized via scenes in which some aspect of memory is central. Rather than view the unfolding of their relationship over time from the perspective of scaffolding, we suggest that the psychoanalytic concept of the ‘third’ may be more helpful in understanding how memory sites and stories signify shifts in their relationship, and how over time Hoke and Daisy build shared memories, mutual affection, and respect.

The psychoanalytic third

In psychoanalytic thinking the concept of the ‘third’ refers to the intersubjectivity between the analysand and the analyst, and a space where persons can see one another as separate, complex and wholly human. It emerges as two persons fully engage in the exploration of meanings, reasons, motives and actions. Often the space is created by small stories involving memories. The idea of the third can be traced back to the work of German philosopher Hegel on self-consciousness and the necessity of mutual recognition of self and other (Redding, 2015). Hegel recognized the fragility of equilibrium in this intersubjective consciousness, and introduced the literary example of the master-slave dynamic. One of the two in a dyad may desire to overpower and control the other—one becoming “master” and the other “slave”. However this will inevitably be paradoxical as the “master” objectifies the “slave” and thus hinders the process of mutual recognition, preventing the “slave” from recognizing it back. Ogden (2004) and Benjamin (1999, 2004) have elaborated the theory as it applies to the therapeutic situation, addressing issues of asymmetries of power, differing subjectivities of therapist and patient, and processes of mutual recognition. Benjamin defines this intersubjectivity as a “relationship of mutual recognition—a relation in which each person experiences the other as a ‘like subject,’ another mind who can be ‘felt with,’ yet has a distinct, separate center of feeling and perception” (Benjamin, 2004, p. 5). In therapy the potential space of thirdness is created by moving from complementarity, an either/or, dyadic position of “given and taken, doer and done to, powerful and powerless” (Benjamin, 1999, p. 194) to a consciousness in which each begins to differentiate between the other as an object and the other as a subject with his or her own separate center of thought and feeling. Through recognizing the other, one recognizes one’s self.

Memory and the third in DMD

Here we explore the roles and performances of memories and how they help to create the potential for transitions over time and the emergence of the ‘third’ in the relationship between Daisy and Hoke. The transition in their struggle for power and autonomy in the relationship from the either/or dyadic positions of doer (Daisy) to done to (Hoke) in the beginning to a recognition of each other as another mind with a “distinct separate center of feeling and perception” (Benjamin, 2004: p. 5) occurs not only in the dialogue but in the spaces, memories and other socially constructed and non-human aspects of the play. For the purposes of this paper, we suggest an additional elaboration of the idea of the third, viewing it as the space in which the re-authoring of self-other takes place. In addition, our reading of Daisy allows us to explore the ways that telling memory stories may help to create the ‘third’—a space for intersubjectivity and mutual recognition.

The play opens with Miss Daisy offstage calling “Idella, I’m going to market” followed by the sounds of an ignition being turned on. Then a “... horrible crash, followed by bangs and booms and wood splintering” (Uhry, 1986, p. 1). Fearing she can no longer drive safely, her son Boolie, over Daisy’s fierce objections, hires Hoke, a black man about 60, “... A man clearly down on his luck but anxious to keep up appearances” (p. 5). When Boolie tries to coax Daisy to come downstairs and meet Hoke, she is having none of it, “No. ... I’m 72 years old, ... but unless they rewrote the Constitution and didn’t tell me I still have my rights “ (pp. 3 & 4). “What I do not want and will not have, is some—(She gropes for a bad enough word) some chauffeur sitting in my kitchen, gobbling my food, running up my phone bill. Oh, I hate all that in my house! (p. 4). Daisy does not want Hoke in her home--metaphorically and literally in her private space--and treats Hoke with suspicion, refusing to let him drive her or do anything around the house or garden. Daisy exerts her control over her domain and leaves no doubt about her objection to Hoke’s presence. Daisy not only values her privacy and independence, she is acutely aware of being under surveillance (certainly Boolie has confirmed that), and fears that others, seeing her with a driver, will think she is flaunting her wealth. She insists that she has always done for herself, and takes every opportunity to remind others of her humble roots on Forsyth Street—a memory site that is core to her identity. When Hoke insists that “... a fine rich Jewish lady like you doan’ b’long draggin’ up the steps of no bus, luggin’ no grocery-store bags.” She responds, “I don’t need you. I don’t want you. And I don’t like you saying I’m rich” (p. 10). Daisy then tells him about being born on Forsyth Street, “We didn’t have anything!”

Hoke, for whom work is ennobling, chafes at Daisy's resistance to all his efforts to be of help and tells her he "... feel[s] bad takin' Mist' Werthan's money for doin' nothin'. You understand?" (p. 11)

Daisy: How much does he pay you?

Hoke: That between me and him Miz Daisy.

Daisy: Anything over seven dollars a week is robbery. Highway robbery!

As Daisy gradually becomes more dependent on Hoke, she is even more determined to exert her control and power over him. In one scene Daisy calls Boolie to come over right away and tells him that Hoke stole a can of salmon. Showing him the empty salmon can she says, "They all take things, you know" (p. 17). Her stereotypic view of other household staff and by extension other blacks in the pre-Civil Rights South mixes with her feelings of vulnerability. When Hoke arrives with the can of salmon to replace the one he had for his lunch because the leftover pork chop that Daisy had left him was stiff, Miss Daisy has finally lost the battle with Boolie to get rid of Hoke. In the sense of Benjamin's language, Daisy is the "doer" and Hoke is the "done to" but the incident forces Daisy to "see" Hoke as someone other than just another black household servant. Harking back to Hegel's "master-slave" analogy, she may "see" herself and, although we do not have access to her inner thoughts, may begin to doubt her racist certainties about Hoke.

A first reading of the play might focus on its portrayal of racism and noblesse oblige, and several reviewers of the film (Dowell, 1990; Vann & Caputi, 1990) strike a strident pitch when describing Hoke as an "Uncle Tom" and Daisy as his "lovable racist" master who "benefit[s] by her own racism" (Dowell, 1990, p. 43). These and similar reviews implore audiences not to lose sight of the tragic genteel racism cast from the self-interested white perspective. While such interpretations have obvious merit, to focus solely on the master-slave archetype loses sight of Daisy and Hoke as interdependent subjects confined by their historical, political, and sociocultural circumstances. Contrary to an emphasis on social difference, when viewed through an affective lens, *Driving Miss Daisy* can be seen as a tender love story that unfolds between an unlikely suitor and his reluctant other half. Hoke is a convincing paradox of self-assured dignity and servility. In a folksy and seemingly ingenuous way, he applies for the chauffeur position by telling Daisy's son Boolie that Jews are believed to be "stingy" and "cheap", a perception he pronounces but does not endorse.

In a scene where Daisy and Hoke are at the grave of her husband (a memory site discussed later) she is further moved to see Hoke as an intelligent, feeling fellow human. Daisy asks Hoke to locate the headstone for the Bauer family. Hoke asks, “How’d that look?” and then admits to Daisy that he can’t read. As Daisy sounds out the B and the R for him, she insists “... If you know your letters you can read. You just don’t know you can read” (Uhry, p. 21). For the first time Daisy sees Hoke as a person with his own needs and separateness—space for the third begins to open.

As their time together lengthens, Hoke takes risks and reveals more of himself to Daisy. In addition to his revelation that he cannot read, they have a confrontation while on a road trip to Mobile, Alabama. They take a wrong turn and need to track back due to Daisy’s insistence on holding the map and giving Hoke directions. Hoke, needing to relieve himself, stops the car. When Daisy asks why he did not relieve himself at the gas station, Hoke reminds her that “colored cain’ use the toilet at no Standard Oil, you know that” (Uhry, p. 31) When Daisy tells him there is no time to stop, he responds “I ain’t no dog and I ain’ no chile and I ain’ jes’ a back of the neck you look at while you goin’ wherever you want to go” (Uhry, p. 32). When he goes off in the dark, Daisy is angry at first and calls for him. She then becomes frightened and can no longer deny her dependence on Hoke and the shift in their relationship.

Before that incident they stop to eat the lunch that Idella has prepared, and Daisy reminisces about her train trip to Mobile many years earlier. In the movie this scene is the first time we see Daisy soften and tell of a happy family memory. Here, as in her references to Forsyth Street, Daisy relates a memory as a family memory. According to Halbwachs (1992) it is at the level of self and family where memory begins, and in the play the means by which Daisy communicates ‘who she is’. In this exchange we can read in the margins the life experiences and opportunities that separate Hoke and Daisy, but in spite of this they can share intimacy and mutual (but different) complementary reminiscences.

Daisy: I remember we were at a picnic somewhere—somebody must have taken us all bathing—and I asked Papa if it was all right to dip my hand in the water. He laughed because I was so timid. And then I tested the salt water on my fingers. Isn’t it silly to remember that?

Hoke: No sillier than what most folks remember. You talkin’ ‘bout first time. I tell you ‘bout the first time I ever leave the state of Georgia?

Daisy: When was that?

Hoke: 'Bout twenty-five minutes back.

Later during an ice storm Daisy is alone at home with the power out. Boolie calls and tells her he can't come to check on her because his driveway is a sheet of ice. Soon after, Hoke shows up with coffee for them both, saying "... Lawd knows you got to have yo' coffee in the morning [to which Daisy replies,] How sweet of you, Hoke" (p. 35). As they sip their coffee they reminisce about Idella. When Boolie calls again to say he expects to be able to drive to see her later in the day, Daisy tells him to stay where he is, that Hoke is there with her.

Boolie: How the hell did he manage that?

Daisy: He's very handy. I'm fine. I don't need a thing in the world.

Boolie: Hello? Have I got the right number? I never heard you say loving things about Hoke before.

Daisy: I didn't say I love him. I said he was handy.

Boolie: Uh-huh.

In stark contrast to that scene of domestic intimacy and comfort, the next scene is set in the context of an actual historic incident, the bombing in 1958 of the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation Temple in Atlanta². Daisy denies that a Reform temple could be the target, asking incredulously, "Who would do that?" to which Hoke replies, 'You know as good as me. Always the same ones ... It doan' matter to them people. A Jew is a Jew to them folks. Jes' like light or dark we all the same nigger" (Uhry, p. 38). Hoke goes on to tell of his own traumatic memory of seeing the father of his best friend hanging from a tree after being lynched, a memory story that upsets and angers Daisy (more on that in the following section). She can no longer deny Hoke his memory, or his consciousness of the plight of his race.

One morning sometime in the 60's when Daisy is probably in her late 80's, Hoke finds her in great distress, believing that she had to get to school with her students' graded papers. Hoke tells her that if she kept it up the doctors would have her in the insane asylum. Just as suddenly as she had the mental break she comes back to herself, and in a normal voice asks Hoke whether he is still driving her Oldsmobile. He replies that he has not had the car for 15 years and is driving her 1963 Cadillac. Daisy tells him she thinks he should not be driving at all, "the way you see" How you know the way I see, 'less you lookin' outta my eyes?" (Uhry, p. 47) reminding Daisy that he has his own way of seeing the world and she does not define him or his experience. Daisy, frail and still frightened at her break and what it implies, says, "Hoke?

Hoke: Yassum?

Daisy: You're my best friend.

Hoke Come on, Miz Daisy. You jes'—

Daisy: No. Really. You are. (She takes his hand)

Hoke: Yassum.

At this point in the play, Hoke and Daisy see each other “as a ‘like subject,’ another mind who can be ‘felt with,’ yet has a distinct, separate center of feeling and perception” (Benjamin, 2004, p. 5). A space has been created for the two characters to playfully interact, to know and be known, to find the other, and be found.

Uhry and the “Atlanta Trilogy” as Lieux de Mémoire

Moving from a microanalysis of the events and dialogue of the play, here we speculate about the role of collective memory, particularly the intersection of the collective memories of Jews of the American South and African-Americans in the era of Jim Crow. Following Coser's translation of Halbwachs (1992), Uhry's work (by his own admission) is a reconstruction of the past, and this reconstruction of collective memory “obligates people not just to reproduce in thought previous events of their past, but also to touch them up, to shorten them, or to complete them so that, however convinced we are that our memories are exact, we give them a prestige that reality did not possess” (p. 51). Uhry, growing up with his grandmother, was immersed in her collective memory of her secular Southern Jewish heritage. In the Halbwachsian sense, Uhry's individual autobiography, combined with his strands of collective of memory, construct his work and his identity. Auchmuty's article illustrates this: “Alfred Uhry wasn't raised much of a Jew” (42) ... [his family] were “Reform Jews, followers of a social faith that values charitable works almost as much as the Torah. They're the ones who most wanted to assimilate, the ones least given to ritual” (43), and Uhry describes his family as “Southern as it comes” (43). Jews of his grandmother's generation believed themselves superior to other Jews who came increasingly from Eastern Europe. As social and economic elites their Southerness was their primary identity.

The most well-known of Uhry's work, *Driving Miss Daisy* was the first in a trilogy known as the “Atlanta Trilogy”, all set in Atlanta in the first half of the 20th century. The next play in the trilogy, *The Last Night of Ballyhoo* is set at the time of the premiere of *Gone with the Wind*³, and was followed by *Parade* in 1998. *Parade*, an award winning musical, is based on events sur-

rounding the lynching in 1915 of Jewish-American Leo Frank. To set the stage for this analysis we return to the scene of the Temple bombing:

Hoke and Daisy are stuck in traffic when Hoke tells Daisy about the bombing. At first Daisy does not believe it, insisting a reform temple would not be the target. To which Hoke replies, It doan' matter to them people. A Jew is a Jew to them folks. Jes' like light or dark we all the same nigger. Hoke then recounts in graphic detail witnessing as a child the lynched body of his best friend's father, telling Daisy, "You go on and cry" (p. 38-9).

Daisy: I'm not crying.

Hoke: Yassum.

Daisy: The idea! Why did you tell me that?

Hoke: I doan' know. Seems like *disheah mess put me in mind of it* (our emphasis).

Daisy: Ridiculous! The temple has nothing to do with that!

Hoke: So you say.

After arguing that Hoke and the policeman were lying, Daisy orders Hoke to stop talking about it. When Hoke shows sympathy for her upset—suggesting that she would feel better once home, Daisy denies that she feels bad and orders, "Stop talking to me!"

As McGraw observes, "[t]his exchange reveals Hoke's belief in a basis of community between himself and Daisy" ...yet [she] rebuffs him, distancing the Temple crisis from 'that'—Hoke's lynching story... Hoke believes that the Temple bombing brings them together...but now her Jewishness becomes paramount through the assault, threatening to dismantle the stability of her identity" (p.52). This juxtaposition of the bombing and Hoke's memory of a lynching is evocative of a traumatic collective memory they both would share—that of Leo Frank, a Jewish-American lynched in 1915. Though that history is not told or made explicit in the play, it can be read in the margins. Indeed, the story of Frank's lynching is the basis of the third play in Uhry's trilogy, *Parade*.

The Leo Frank case

The Leo Frank case could be said to 'haunt' Uhry's play. Daisy/Lena Fox would have been in her late thirties at the time of the case, and it would have had a powerful impact on the characters, including Hoke. As Goldberg (1997) observes, "[t]he lynching of Leo Frank ... jolted Jewish southerners, and it hovered over much of Jewish life in the South through much of this century" (p. 66). According to the Jewish Virtual Library, "Southern Jewish historians note that Atlan-

ta Jewry has still not fully recovered from the Leo Frank case, and that the Temple bombing ... simply opened those wounds” (n.d., no page)

Leo Frank, a New York Jew who managed a pencil factory that employed many young girls from the countryside, including thirteen-year old Mary Phagan who had moved to Atlanta to help her tenant farming family in Marietta Georgia. Mary was robbed and murdered on Confederate Memorial Day (a lieu de mémoire) as she left the factory to see the parade downtown (Goldberg, p. 68). Frank, a prosperous man who would have little motivation to rob Mary, was tried and sentenced to death for the murder. The factory, and others like it, had a reputation for sexual exploitation of the young white girls who worked there, and rumors spread that she had been raped. “The rumor, taken as fact, fueled a torrent of anti-semitic rhetoric about lustful Jews ravishing white Christian girls (p. 88). In spite of the efforts of Atlanta’s elite to have his sentence commuted, a group of men calling themselves ‘The Knights of Mary Phagan’ stormed the jail where Frank was being held, drove to Marietta and lynched Frank. “The Leo Frank lynching reverberated throughout southern Jewry, particularly in Atlanta ... so great was their fear of anti-semitic terrorism ... that many Jewish families packed women and children to stay with relatives in other parts of the country” (p. 68).

Lieux de mémoire

Drawing on the work of Pierre Nora (1989), we view Alfred Uhry’s work, *Atlanta*, and the scene of the Temple bombing in the play as lieux de mémoire. “Lieux de mémoire are simple and ambiguous, natural and artificial, at once immediately available in concrete sensual experience and susceptible to the most abstract elaboration. Indeed they are lieux in three senses of the word—material, symbolic and functional...the three aspects always coexist (Nora, 1989, p. 18-9). “Contrary to historical objects ... lieux de mémoire ... are their own referent: pure, exclusively self-referential signs (p. 23). Although the bombing was an historical reality, in the play the memory of the event is literary—a construct of the author’s imagination--“...where memory crystallizes and secrets itself ... [and] ...takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images and objects (Nora, 1989, p. 8-9).

Atlanta and the “American South [are] abundant with lieux de mémoire, sites of memory that Nora (1989) identifies as marking the interaction and tension between history and memory” (McElroy, 2015 p. 44). Most prominent in the play is the Temple, a material presence in the bombing scene, a symbol of Daisy’s identity as a ‘reform’ Jew, and functional in supporting her

belief that by her regular attendance and charity she is a fully accepted member of Atlanta society. In tension with the Temple is Daisy's repeatedly reminding Hoke and her son that she was brought up on Forsyth Street, a material site that for her symbolizes her modest beginnings and learning to "do without". For Daisy, Forsyth Street functions as a defense against being thought of as 'rich', which, as a Jew, she consciously or unconsciously understands has anti-semitic implications.

The Temple bombing calls forth in Hoke his own lieu de mémoire--functional, as his way of seeking common ground with Daisy--and material in the horrific image⁴ of his friend's father "... hangin' up yonder wid his hands tie behind his back an' the flies all over him" (p. 38). And Hoke's story has symbolic meaning, "Jes like light or dark we all the same nigger" (p. 38).

For Daisy, her husband's grave is a lieux de mémoire, and as Hoke notes, she has been out to tend it three times in the past month, telling her he believes she's the best widow in the state of Georgia (p. 19). Daisy's reply hints of her loneliness and sense of abandonment:

Daisy: Boolie's always pestering me to let the staff out her to tend this plot. Perpetual care they call it.

Hoke: Doan' you do it. It right to have somebody from the family lookin' after you.

Daisy: I'll certainly never have that. Boolie will have me in perpetual care before I'm cold. Thus the gravesite is not merely material—a place to be tended—it is symbolic of Daisy's feelings about her relationship with her son. And its pristine condition is functional for Daisy, who is intensely conscious of her status as a dutiful Jewish widow.

Moving forward in time to today, a quick internet search yields photos of the graves of Lena Fox and her husband at Crestlawn Cemetery, accompanied by references to DMD⁵. Likewise, at the website of the Temple, the details and background of the bombing is described and a photo of the destruction hangs inside the Temple⁶. Also under the History section of the Temple site there is a page about the film of DMD⁷.

Möbius strip-like, *Driving Miss Daisy* reflects back on itself and metamorphizes into a multiplicity of lieux de mémoire. *Driving Miss Daisy* has entered into the collective memory, a different one from that portrayed in the play but as Nora observed, "...still subject to be being forgotten and revived in the future" (p. 20). "What is the essence of this ... lieu de mémoire--its original intention or its return in the cycles of memory? Clearly both: all lieux de mémoire are objects mises en abîme" (p. 20). DMD is a staple of theatre repertory and so far there have been

two major revivals: one on Broadway in 2010 and another in Australia in 2013 that was filmed and is now in regular rotation on PBS's Great Performances (2015). All of this, combined with the near-ubiquitous presence on cable television of the 1989 film, indicates that it continues to resonate with audiences. This continuous reiteration, with the ever-changing directors, sets, actors, stages, media, and audiences can be seen as a renegotiation with the collective memory over time and place and "... the memory of that recycled material as it moves through new and different productions contributes in no small measure to the richness and density of the operations of theatre in general as a site of memory, both personal and cultural" (Carlson, p. 3-4). For reasons upon which we can only speculate, *Driving Miss Daisy* endures, yet like our own memories, it is born anew and changed with each performance and each reception.

Notes

¹ For clarity in reading, *Driving Miss Daisy* will occasionally be abbreviated as DMD.

² It's worth noting here that at the time of the Temple bombing, Uhry would have been 22, an age when life events form the most long-lasting memories (Rubin et. al, 1998) and others.

³ McGraw (2001) notes the similarity of the relationship of Hoke and Daisy to that of Scarlett O'Hara and Mammy, "...[in] each case, the African-American knows the white mistress better than she knows herself" (p. 44).

⁴ Various accounts of the Leo Frank lynching include the souvenir photo of him hanging from a tree.

⁵ http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WM1D7J_Lena_Fox_Miss_Daisy_of_Driving_Miss_Daisy.

⁶ <http://www.the-temple.org/AboutUs/History/TheTempleBombing.aspx>.

⁷ <http://the-temple.org/AboutUs/History/TheTemplefeaturedinDrivingMissDaisy.aspx>.

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